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ABSTRACT

One hundred years of rural development in India is surveyed, tracing the impact of colonial administration up to and including the decades of independence--an administration built on elitism, centralism, and paternalism. Four major rural problems of famine, abuses of land tenure, peasant indebtedness, and rural disaffection and how political entities have attempted to overcome them are discussed. It is shown that colonial rulers dealt with scarcity, disparity, and disaffection in a variety of ways: agricultural "demonstration and propaganda" to counteract scarcity, cooperatives/tenancy reforms to check disparity, local government to redress disaffection, and techniques of rural reconstruction. The measure of success is addressed, and the shift from community development to agricultural extension as a means of rural development following World War II is chronicled. The fifties are described as a decade of community development and agriculture extension during which American influence intermingled with colonial traditions and the sixties as the culmination of American influence, with a return to older traditions. This decade is seen as one of consolidation, with comparisons drawn between development in India and China. Whether the new poverty and target groups orientation accomplishes overall rural development, so far elusive, or is merely a change in methods, remains to be seen. (RS)

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Ten Decades of Rural Development: Lessons from India

by

Akhter Hameed Khan

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TEN DECADES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT: LESSONS FROM INDIA*

by

Akhter Hameed Khan**
Visiting Professor

1978

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1. THE COLONIAL CONNECTION

One effect of the two great wars of our century was the end of the colonial era. Empires broke up and foreign rule disappeared from many Asian and African countries, but it has left deep traces. Over a long period the traditional political and economic structures of these countries were torn apart and battered into new forms. At present, their traumatic colonial experience is exercising a profound influence over these countries and will probably continue to do so in the future. Few of them have detached themselves radically from their past, or chosen divergent paths. Most have retained, almost intact, the colonial superstructure, and also maintained close relations with their old masters.

During their glorious days, the colonialists used the claim that their role was very benevolent, that they were civilizing and enriching the subjugated peoples who otherwise would have remained barbaric and poor. Nowadays these claims are generally discounted. On the contrary, one school of thought insists that colonialism is the real father of underdevelopment.

1.1 Asia, Africa, and South America

Historically, the colonial situation differed in Asia, Africa, and South America. South American countries were quickly and completely conquered in the sixteenth century, and their native cultures were totally subdued. In Asia, except for the Philippines, colonial domination was not established until the end of the eighteenth century. Asian cultures could not be overwhelmed; national revivals began shortly after the

culmination of foreign conquest. Arrica was seized by colonial powers in the nineteenth century and has suffered the shortest period of colonial rule. The earliest successful anti-colonial revolts took place in South America. Asian and African countries have become independent quite recently, thus, South American countries have the longest colonial as well as post-colonial experience.

1.2 The colonial era--destruction and reconstruction

The colonial era was both destructive and constructive. It destroyed the old political systems and elites of the conquered people and built new systems and new elites. It shattered traditional economic patterns and created a novel economic relationship, that between the so-called mother country and its colonies, the former being industrial and rich and the latter, agricultural and poor. It denigrated the religious, social, and educational institutions of the natives and tried to westernize and enlighten them. The conquistadors were the heroes and the Christian missionaries were the saints of colonialism, both working together for the betterment of "barbarians." Asian or African countries had been conquered many times, but previous conquerors had, sooner or later, forgotten the "mother country" and identified themselves with the new land. Colonial rulers aspired to be different; they wanted to be alien and superior, and to impose on the natives, not only political subordination, but also an inferior economic and cultural status.

1.3 Self-destruction

In spite of the faith of its founders, colonialism did not last very long. In fact it was inherently self-destructive. First, the inevitable

rivalry between colonial powers led to great wars. Secondly, the reaction against racial arrogance and political oppression gave birth to powerful protest movements whose leaders, significantly, were the products of colonial education. Thirdly, the adverse economic relationship increased impoverishment and discontent. British pioneers of the golden age of the Indian Empire had proudly proclaimed that they had solved problems which the Mogul Emperors could not solve. Unfortunately, the golden age soon vanished and the successors of the pioneers founded themselves surrounded by problems which were, to a great extent, their own Frankensteins.

1.4 Features of colonial administration

Colonial rulers claimed special credit for establishing "law and order." For this purpose they built a very strong administration whose chief features were elitism, centralization, and paternalism. Power was concentrated in the hands of a small governing class, who regarded themselves as guardians of the people under their charge, their wards. For smooth functioning, a hierarchical order was encouraged. The first class elites at the top placed second and third class elites as collaborators at lower levels. For the sake of pacification any existing or potential local centers of authority or defiance were ruthlessly eliminated. The consequence of pervasive elitism was the widening disparity between the privileged few and the non-privileged many. The consequence of centralization was general nonparticipation and the atrophy of local initiative. The consequence of paternalism was childish dependency and a cult of prayerful petitions.

1.5 The colonial situation in rural areas

The rural areas were gradually transformed under colonial rule. Taking India as an example, it can be said that at first the imperial peace was beneficial. Anarchical strife was suppressed and productive cultivation of land was extended. But after a few decades prospects of common prosperity faded away as the population began to increase and the rural economy began to stagnate. Increased population and reduced non-farm employment weakened the traditional status of farmers, workers, and artisans. Consequently, landlords became more oppressive, demanding higher rents and resorting to law courts to enforce their demands or evict their tenants. Another privileged class, the merchant-moneylenders, also learned to use colonial laws to make large profits and extort compounded interest from indigent borrowers. The legal and administrative structure of the empire was immensely strong, but, in the rural areas, it was often subject to corruption and too often it became a pliant tool in the hands of landlords and moneylenders.

1.6 Three periods of colonial rule

Colonial administrators considered rural areas extremely important. They understood that the base of their Indian empire, like previous empires, was essentially agrarian. Throughout the imperial period they believed they were engaged in the heroic task of sustaining the villages. But their perception of rural needs changed from time to time. In the initial phase the establishment of order and the settlement of land for cultivation were seen as the two paramount requisites. After conferring these great boons, the colonial pioneers expected steady rural progress as well as abiding

loyalty. They never tired of pointing out that never before had the Indian villagers enjoyed such benign justice. But a few decades later, in the middle period of the empire, in spite of some progress and much peace, the British administrators had to acknowledge the emergence of four major problems--the recurrence of famine, the inequity of land tenure, ever-increasing peasant indebtedness, and smouldering disaffection with the government. In the third and last phase the rural problems were magnified and the administrators encountered fundamental challenges--political, economic, and moral--to the ideology of the empire.

2. PERCEPTION OF FOUR MAJOR RURAL PROBLEMS

During the last decades of the nineteenth century colonial administrators tried to analyze and solve these four major problems. Famines occurred at frequent intervals, devastating whole regions, generating enormous human misery and damaging the splendid imperial image. Evictions by landlords worsened the plight of tenants and sharecroppers and sometimes led to violent outbursts. Peasant revolts could seriously undermine the agrarian base of the empire. The ruthless operations of merchant-moneylenders were inexorably pauperizing the peasantry, depriving many of them of their little plots of land. The desperate ones were becoming "dacoits" or bandits, forming gangs and endangering "law and order." Above all, for a tiny ruling class of foreigners, the awareness of a lack of loyalty among the rural masses was a most formidable threat. Luckily, the disaffection was concealed in passive apathy, but at intervals, it would flare up in the form of famine, peasant riots, and banditry.

2.1 Famine: cause and cure

In the imperial era the seriousness of a problem was recognized by appointing a royal inquiry commission. Not one, but several commissions inquired into famines and prescribed measures for relief and prevention. The commissions usually pointed out that famine was a natural Asian phenomenon, partly due to the climate and partly to bad farming, which could not be prevented except in a few regions where irrigation canals could be built. In other regions only its shock could be lessened by means of quick transportation of food supplies by railways and roads. Subsequently a famine code was prepared which described, in minute detail, when and how the dole should be distributed to save the disabled from starvation, or how to organize public works at "test" (extremely low) wages for unemployed peasants, or to advance loans to the landowners for the next cultivation. The famine code was loudly advertised as one of the imperial achievements, unprecedented in Indian or Asian history. It was claimed, on the basis of rather dubious statistics, that under British rule very few villagers died of starvation. More deaths, of course, were caused by malnutrition or disease. However, famines continued to occur with disturbing frequency, except in regions where the necessary investment was made for the control of floods and drought. In one of the very last years of the empire (1943) the Bengal famine occurred, one of the greatest man-made famines in Indian history.

2.2 Abuses of land tenure--tenancy reforms

Commissions were also appointed to analyze eruptions of unrest. Of course, first the soldiers crushed the disturbance, then investigation exposed innumerable abuses of power by planters and landlords which had goaded the harried cultivators to revolt. While the commissioners generally upheld the tenurial system, they expressed sympathy for the underdogs, and recommended a little more control over landlords and planters and a few more rights for tenants. Landless laborers were outside their purview because, until then, they were an insignificant minority. In the middle period, tenancy reform, or land reform as it is now called, was a subject of continuous discussion. It remained so until the end of the empire. Within the context of a stagnant economy, depressed prices, diminishing holdings, rising rents and interest charges--which of course the imperial administrators could not change--they really tried, with small success, to help the peasant farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers. But, at the end, a very difficult land tenure situation was left for the succeeding governments.

2.3 Peasant-indebtedness--cause and cure

Landlords were not the only protégés who were abusing the powers acquired by them under the empire; merchants and moneylenders were doing the same. Trade and usury hurt the peasant proprietors to such an extent that their desperation at last attracted the attention of district officers. They discovered that low prices and high interest charges were bankrupting the peasants at an alarming rate. Many of them were losing their lands.

The administrators saw the danger of this trend and wished to reverse it. Those were the days of laissez-faire when trade operations were considered sacrosanct, but attempts were made, nonetheless, to reduce usury and regulate moneylenders. However, under the prevailing circumstances, the lenders still had wealth and prestige, while the borrowers were needy and helpless. Regulations were enacted, but rarely enforced. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, some philanthropic officials wanted to give the peasants the strength of unity by organizing them into cooperative societies modeled after the German credit unions. It was hoped that in this way they would be able to protect themselves from the excesses of merchant moneylenders, just as the German farmers had done a generation earlier. During the abnormal agricultural boom of the first world war, village cooperatives flourished briefly, but the following slump soon made them insolvent "banks of the bankrupts." The early decades of our century found peasant indebtedness growing inexorably, not much affected by regulations of usury or by credit and marketing cooperatives.

2.4 Rural disaffection and its remedy

As an antidote to the distress of rural indebtedness, colonial administrators imported cooperatives from Germany. As a safeguard against the dangers of rural disaffection, they imported the Anglo-Saxon concept of local government. They hoped that local councils would radiate feelings of participation, banish apathy, and encourage local initiative. Furthermore, beginning logically at the bottom, training in local self-government would gradually upgrade the Indians for national independence. But the promotion by eccentric pioneers of the concept of decentralization and

autonomy could not be reconciled with the dominant imperial attitudes which were centralist, elitist, and paternalistic. Decade after decade, until the sudden end of the empire, cooperatives or "panchayats" (local councils) remained not as functional parts of the steel frame but as its trim.

3. NEW IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Thus, for fifty years colonial administrators grappled with the four monstrous problems which had emerged in the middle period. The solutions were far from effective. Instead of disappearing, the monsters became more intractable. In the third and last period every bastion of the empire was assaulted by new forces. The imperial ideology was based on three axioms: the superiority of Europeans, the benevolence of colonial occupation, and the right of white men to be the guardians of colored men. The new nationalist challenge refuted every one of these axioms. There was no superiority; there was no benevolence; and there was no right of guardianship. On the contrary, there was the inalienable right of self-determination. In India the nationalist challenge was reinforced by the spiritual teachings of Gandhi. He declared colonialism a moral abomination, the British Raj the devil's government, and the world-grabbing western civilization the scourge of humanity. Side by side with the nationalist challenge came the socialist challenge. It used the weapon of economic analysis to attack capitalism and its offspring, colonialism. The appeal of nationalism and socialism was greatly enhanced in Asia by the rise of non-European Japan and the success of the Russian revolution.

3.1 The colonial response--philosophy of rural reconstruction

In order to respond to the new challenges--political, economic, and moral--the colonial administrators evolved a comprehensive philosophy or ideology of rural reconstruction, which was sedulously propagated in the turbulent third and fourth decades of our century. In India F. L. Brayne was the most famous propounder of this philosophy, a self-styled Socrates of the Indian villages, but similar trends were visible in other colonial countries. For instance, the "ethical policy" in Indonesia also tried to rehabilitate rural areas in the same manner. Brayne admitted that village conditions were indeed miserable. He agreed with Gandhi about the facts of misery but not about their causes. According to Brayne, the deplorable rural conditions were not the consequence of the imperial system, as the nationalists or socialist agitators suggested. No, the misery of the Indian villagers was due mainly to their own ignorance and bad habits, their folly and vices. Indeed, they were their own enemies. Brayne compiled a long list of their shortcomings--lazy farming, burning precious cow dung, addiction to the hubble-hubble (the hookah), poor hygiene, litigation, costly death and marriage feasts, female illiteracy, etc. The Socrates of the Indian villages, having diagnosed the disease, prescribed the cure. Quite logically it consisted in the acquisition of knowledge and the reform of vicious habits: learning and practicing better methods of agriculture, health, education, and social conduct. Brayne assigned a new role to the government officer, viz to be the missionary of enlightenment and reform. Contrary to the popular stereotype of an arrogant and corrupt bully, the officer was to convert himself into a

guide, philosopher, and friend of the villagers. He was also to inspire the loyal old collaborators, members of the gentry, to mend their ways and give a proper lead to the commoners. Brayne invented resounding rural reconstruction slogans--reform yourselves, help yourselves, and follow the official leader. They are still ringing in our ears.

3.2 Conceptual legacies of colonial rural reconstruction

In the last phase of the empire there were two parallel perceptions of rural problems and rural development--the departmental perception and the philosophical or ideological perception. The departments confined their purview to their own fields--local government, cooperatives, education, health, agriculture, irrigation, etc. It was narrow but specific. The philosophical view was broad and obscure. Brayne's rural movement, a true child of colonial paternalism, resembled Victorian philanthropy, which also blamed the poor for their poverty and offered self-help as a panacea. Hard-boiled administrators regarded the rural reconstruction approach with contempt. The movement did not make any substantive change anywhere and vanished at the beginning of the second world war. But it left amazingly influential conceptual legacies in the form of three stereotypes: the peasants as childish, ignorant, and docile; the officers as true guides, philosophers, and friends of the peasants; and the rural gentry as the government's loyal assistants, and the peasant's natural leaders. The principles and methods of colonial rural reconstruction were readily accepted after the war by succeeding governments and international agencies. They found the old approach,

originally invented to counteract subversion, extremely appropriate as a non-revolutionary philosophy and technique of rural development. We may note that a revolutionary organizer like Chairman Mao had entirely different ideas about the characteristics and roles of peasants, bureaucrats, and the gentry.

4. RIVAL IDEOLOGIES

4.1 The Gandhian rural utopia

In the last period, the colonial philosophy of rural reconstruction was competing with three other ideologies--the Gandhian, Fabian Socialist, and Marxist Socialist. Let us glance briefly at their rural visions. For thirty years Gandhi's ideas challenged the imperialists and inspired Indian idealists. Gandhi was a nationalist as well as a utopian. He not only denounced colonialism, but also rejected industrialism and urbanization. His vision of the good life was not the acquisition of abundance, but the curbing of wants, an ascetic renunciation. He thought that the misery of the villagers was mainly caused by the selfishness and greed of their rulers, the rich, and of themselves, as well. It could be cured only through the sacrifice of self and service to others by everybody, rich and poor alike. With few needs and much love everyone could live happily again in self-sufficient little republics which, presumably, the Indian villages used to be in the golden age. The missionary of the movement, the guide-philosopher-friend, was the "constructive worker" who embodied its high ideals and showed the true path to the villagers. The constructive workers were social monks and their "ashrams" (centers) were modern

monasteries. Undoubtedly their contribution in popularizing feelings of national pride and defiance was great. But their neo-monasticism seemed to avoid or overlook important economic issues. After independence its role in the economic development of villages did not prove very dynamic. When Gandhi was alive, admirers like Louis Fischer claimed that for the next generation Gandhi, not Lenin, would become the real Master. Post-Gandhian years scarcely justify such faith. As a matter of fact, as far as rural uplift is concerned, Gandhi's movement of constructive work has been only a little more effective than the official rural reconstruction sponsored by F. L. Brayne. Very few areas were changed permanently or substantially by either. But again significant conceptual legacies have been left by the Gandhians for the present-day planners--the concepts of the missionary "gram-sevak" (servant of the village), the little village republics, and the bonds of love and sacrifice.

4.2 Fabian socialist version of rural reform--its influence

England, the birthplace of modern capitalism and imperialism, was also a cradle of socialist thought. Before the end of the nineteenth century the Fabians laid the foundation of British socialism. When the Labor Party came into power, socialist theories began to influence political and economic structures in England and even the colonial government in India. Of course, the actual shifts in India were much smaller and slower; but socialist ideas, nonetheless, undermined imperial faith and caused a great intellectual ferment. Their full impact was seen in the plans made by succeeding governments. Nehru, the first prime minister of India, was a disciple of the Fabians. Five Year Plans

of India or Pakistan declared that their goal was the welfare state. They wanted to be socialists in the British manner.

Unlike Lenin or Mao, the British socialists had never lived with peasants. Consequently Fabian thinking about rural problems was not very profound. They thought that rural conditions could easily be improved by three measures: first, the implementation of agrarian reforms to remove palpable inequities, redistribute land, and impose ceilings on ownership; second, the formation of cooperatives to prevent exploitation by middlemen and moneylenders; third, the rapid expansion of education, health and other welfare services to raise the rural standard of living. Later, when the succeeding governments tried to implement these measures, two serious faults were found: efforts to curb privileges were too often thwarted by the privileged; and expansion of welfare services was rarely matched by expansion in production. The superstructure of the pseudo-socialist, imitation welfare states was raised precariously on good intentions.

4.3 Rural socialism in Russia and China--its influence

The Russian revolution presented a new vision of rural areas unencumbered by the ancient oppressors--emperors, aristocrats, landlords, merchants, and moneylenders. When Lenin redistributed land among the Russian "muzhiks" (peasants) he thought that the example would quickly inspire the Indian "kisans" (peasants) to protest for their rights. He also knew that, contrary to the predictions of Marx, it would not be the well-fed workers of industrial nations, but the hungry colonial peasants who would carry the banners of proletarian revolutions. And, indeed, in the wake of the first world war rural unrest spread in

China, India, Burma, Indochina, and Java not uninfluenced by the occurrences in Russia. However, the horrors of Stalinist collectivization diminished the rural appeal of socialist parties. After the second world war the Chinese revolution refurbished the vision of rural socialism. The inequity, poverty, and humiliation which the Chinese peasants had suffered resembled the plight of peasants in many other Asian and African countries. Thus, the epoch-making changes in China could not escape their notice.

5. WORLD WAR II AND THE TWO CAMPS

Soon after the second world war colonial empires crumbled and foreign rulers departed, leaving the unfinished task of rural development to their successors. The old problems remained unsolved, complicated, and formidable. For the new states, putting their topsy-turvy house in order proved even more difficult than regaining independence. The world was now divided into conflicting camps. China, the largest of the poverty-stricken, backward countries, joined the Socialist camp. India and most other ex-colonies joined the "American" camp. They built on their colonial foundations and retained, almost unchanged, their political, economic, and administrative heritage. They made gradual reform, not revolution, their motto and maintained intimate relations with their old masters. During the fifties there was much talk about the whole world watching an exciting race between the two shabby giants, India and China. At that time, most American experts believed that liberal India, aided by rich nations, would surge ahead, leaving radical and unaided China floundering in distress and disorder. Today the great race or its outcome is rarely mentioned.

6. AMERICAN LEADERSHIP AND AID

From 1950 onwards America was the undisputed leader of the "free world" camp. The leader was determined to restrain, by hot or cold war, the expansion of radicalism, and to bolster client nations. First Western Europe and Japan were rehabilitated so that their prosperity and progress might serve as bulwarks against revolutions. The Marshall Plan spectacularly vindicated American leadership. It seemed obvious that a helping hand could be extended in the same manner to the poorer camp followers, and American assistance could stabilize ex-colonial states as it had stabilized Western Europe and Japan. The great leader started aid programs all around the world. Apart from military aid, material aid was given in the shape of loans, grants, capital, and consumer goods. Technical aid was provided in the form of experts, advisors, and foreign training. And ideological aid flowed in through the dissemination of orthodox economic and sociological wisdom. In the new dawn of the fifties rulers of many penurious states regarded America hopefully as the good fairy and foreign aid as a magic wand.

6.1 American rural programs--community development

In this decade two great rural programs were sponsored by the Americans--community development (CD) and agricultural extension (AE). The former was newly fashioned by American sociologists, while the latter was an old product of the American land-grant colleges. Both CD and AE were generously supported and carefully supervised by American advisors. The CD program as a synthesizer easily absorbed elements of colonial

rural reconstruction as well as Gandhian constructive work. But, of course, CD professed to be far more modern and comprehensive. It promised political peace by including everyone in a harmonious community and putting an end to conflicts. It promised economic prosperity by inculcating the desire for development and by securing common participation. As a weapon of the Cold War, CD offered the quietism of consensus as a superior alternative to turbulent radicalism.

6.2 Principles and methods of community development

Brayne wanted to uplift the villagers by sending an official guide-philosopher-friend. Gandhi wanted to do that by sending a constructive worker. Following in the footsteps of Brayne and Gandhi, CD relied mainly on a government village-level worker (VLW) as the agent of change. Sending a missionary outsider was considered essential in every case. The VLW, like Brayne's guide, was advised to collaborate closely with the local gentry, the established or "natural" leaders. Evidently, the VLW came to help everybody, not by fighting for the weak against the strong, but by uniting all of them, weak and strong, into a fraternal community. Surely all could join hands for the sake of development. Love of development, like the love of God, should make the lions fondle the sheep. The VLW, acting as a catalyst, would unite the villagers by discovering for them their common needs, felt or unfelt. Then he would lead them to a common endeavor. He would teach them to form councils and committees for the completion of projects. Much, of course, would be done by means of self-help, as Brayne had proposed before, but, now and then, the VLW would further encourage and stimulate the villagers by obtaining for them matching grants and technical

assistance, just as the Americans were stimulating the client governments with foreign aid. The VLW would be a multipurpose agent representing all "nation-building" departments. He would combine the functions of a missionary, organizer, technician, and patron. Community development aspired to coordinate the activities of other departments, and follow an integrated approach. Its vision of development included the improvement of everything: social harmony, economic production, education, health, and recreation.

6.3 Shortcomings of community development

It was in India that CD first became a great rural program. Then, under American auspices, it was introduced in dozens of other countries. In the fifties it became a world-wide movement. But its decline was as sudden as its rise. In 1964 U.S. AID abolished its CD division and forgot the name itself. The initial faith in CD and the subsequent disillusion is best illustrated in the speeches from 1950 to 1958 of Prime Minister Nehru. Careful analysts found that CD had four crucial imperfections:

(A) It promoted welfare activities more effectively than productive activities. Particularly, it seemed incapable of solving the national food crisis.

(B) CD did not succeed significantly in forming harmonious communities. It did not secure general participation. The poorer classes remained as they were, apathetic and skeptical.

(C) CD's reliance on its own agents and total collaboration with established leaders further confirmed the elitist and paternalist bias, a colonial heritage, and inhibited the growth of true local initiative.

(D) CD's role as a generalist captain and coordinator was not acceptable to the specialist departments. Agricultural experts especially complained about the inadequacy of a multipurpose VLW as their agent.

In India, after a decade of great faith and enormous investment in CD as the best strategy for rural development, the emphasis suddenly shifted to modernizing agriculture, building of rural institutions, panchayats, cooperatives, and land reforms. Community development was quietly abandoned by both parents, America and India.

7. THE SHIFTS IN EMPHASIS

Colonial rulers had left behind the three perennial problems: scarcity, disparity, and disaffection. They had also left legacies of solutions: agricultural "demonstration and propaganda" to counteract scarcity, cooperatives and tenancy reforms to check disparity, local government to redress disaffection, and finally a philosophy and technique of rural reconstruction. From 1950 to 1970 in India, the three problems persisted, but there were fluctuations in their pressures like an intermittent fever. The old solutions persisted too, only slightly altered by external influence. From time to time, in reaction to the fluctuating pressures, policy-makers shifted from one solution to another--to CD, to intensive agriculture, to panchayats and cooperatives, to agrarian reform, and back again to integrated rural development. These shifts, although slower and less pronounced, had begun to take place in the last period of the empire.

7.1 Origin of the Department of Agriculture

In India the recurrence of famine was an important factor in discrediting CD. Growing scarcity of food grains for the teeming millions was an intolerable burden, upsetting national plans which were based on

import of capital goods, not food. It raised the cost of living and violently agitated town dwellers and industrial workers. Food production became a matter of utmost urgency. Agricultural experts were called forth to be the standard bearers in the war against hunger and save the nation from collapse. We may remember that the Department of Agriculture was first set up in 1880, after a series of famines, and according to the recommendation of a Royal Commission. The department's functions were to collect statistics, set up training institutions, and upgrade the skill of farmers by means of "demonstration and propaganda." For several decades the department's performance was weak and marginal. Its research was strongly biased in favor of cash crops exported to England. Cheap food crops grown for local consumption were neglected. Subsistence farming was practically unaffected by the department's efforts. While scientific methods were raising yields in Europe or America, the Indian peasants continued to follow traditional methods, and yields remained stagnant. In fact, with further fragmentation of holdings, cultivation of marginal lands, and general exhaustion of the soil, the average yields even declined. Forty years later, in response to the post-war rural depression, another commission was appointed to inquire into the crisis in agriculture. The commissioners recommended that the scope of research, education, and extension be adequately enlarged. They extolled the achievements of American agriculture and presented it as a model for emulation. This was perhaps their most significant suggestion. The colonial administrators had imported, before the end of the nineteenth century, the model of cooperatives from Germany and the model of local government from England. It is a pity they delayed by several decades the import of the American model of agriculture.

7.2 American model of agricultural extension

It was not until 1950, when the British were gone from India, that the American model of agricultural extension (AE) really arrived. Then, propagated by scores of American experts, and hundreds of native experts trained in American universities, and supported by enormous funds, it soon became a dominant influence. The experts assumed that Indian agriculture could be modernized in the same way, though not to the same extent, as American agriculture had been. First, research and extension should be linked as was done long ago by the land-grant colleges. Then, a class of progressive farmers should be created, who would gladly accept the findings of scientific research, and put the new technology into practice. They would soon emerge out of their subsistence-level cocoon, and try to maximize their profits by raising the levels of input and output. An extension agent or assistant, trained and guided by experts, should be sent to the village to demonstrate new techniques, first to the local leaders. The demonstrations would soon convince the villagers. Larger and larger numbers would adopt the methods and within a few years traditional agriculture would be modernized. Unfortunately the actual results were not so spectacular. From 1950 to 1960 the adoption of improved methods was agonizingly slow. In most regions subsistence farming remained very much the same. Extension experts blamed the stolid peasants for not accepting what was so patently good for them. The Asiatic peasant, some experts complained, was a fatalist, a nonachiever. He was not an "economic man." But more cogent reasons can easily be discovered. Evidently, in these sluggish regions, the infrastructure which supports commercial agriculture did not

exist. Neither did a potential class of commercial farmers. Destitute cultivators of tiny holdings, constantly damaged by floods or droughts, were not a promising clientele for extension agents. Besides, the agent himself was often ill-trained and poorly supported by appropriate research.

7.3 The "green revolution" of the sixties

American-sponsored agricultural extension had started in 1950 as a junior partner of CD, but the food crisis turned the tables. After 1960 CD was demoted and AE became the senior partner. This was the time of the invention of miracle seeds and the heavy use of chemical fertilizers. Scientific cultivation of some crops--corn, wheat, and rice--was making a remarkable advance. An agricultural revolution--"a green revolution"--in the poor countries seemed not only possible but imminent. The high hopes were fulfilled to a certain extent. A dramatic increase in the production of wheat, rice, and corn did indeed take place, but not everywhere and not for everybody. It took place mostly in favorable regions, where flood and dought were under control and where a sufficient number of well-to-do farmers were present with enough enterprise and resources to secure the extra inputs--seeds, fertilizers, credit, and machines. For instance, the green revolution spread quickly in the Punjab because that province already had the best irrigation system, and the largest number of affluent farmers with economic holdings. On the other hand, Bengal, afflicted by alternating flood and drought, and without many economic holdings, lagged behind. By 1970 it was seen that the so-called green revolution was a boon for favorable regions and favored classes, but

distressed regions and distressed classes could not reap its benefits immediately. Even in the favorable regions, the new rural entrepreneurs preferring maximum profits to traditional obligations, evicted old tenants. If the emerging capitalist agriculture did increase productivity, it also increased disparity and disaffection.

7.4 Safeguards against disaffection: colonial local government

The danger of popular disaffection was, as we have seen, recognized by colonial administrators in the middle period. They often saw smouldering apathy burst into flames. As a remedial measure they tried to introduce institutions which might give the alienated rural people feelings of belonging. However, from 1880 to 1920 the efforts were more symbolic than real. After the war came the challenge of widespread national agitations. The administrators now gave priority to local government in order to achieve three objectives: (a) turn the people from passive subjects to active partners; (b) mobilize local resources, money, or labor, and to assume major responsibility for rural reconstruction; (c) provide apprenticeship training for full self-government, an art presumably unknown to the colonial people.

Unfortunately, as we have already noted, truly autonomous local government was incompatible with fundamental imperial principles, and therefore never became an integral part of rural administration. There was too little decentralization or delegation of real power, and too much domination by officials and their junior partners, the rural gentry. Using the pretentious slogan of self-help there was too little allocation of resources for the immense task of rural improvement, while the foreign

colonial connection and the concommitant urban bias continuously depressed the rural areas.

7.5 Objectives and performance of post-colonial local government

In 1958 Indian evaluators of CD pointed out that the primary need of rural areas was institutional. Instead of building a lot of "brick and mortar" projects, as CD was doing, panchayats and cooperatives should be organized or strengthened. Disappointed with American-sponsored CD, the planners turned back to older traditions. The reasons for emphasizing local government appeared more urgent than before. It was essential that the rural people identify themselves with their government; otherwise there would be instability. The rural people must assume responsibility for planning and financing their own development; otherwise the central government could to very little. Self-reliant local institutions obviously were the best means for popular participation and general mobilization. If the reasons were the same as before, unfortunately the impediments also were the same. Colonial traditions of centralism, elitism, and paternalism still prevailed. The administrative machine and its manner of operation was almost unchanged. Not surprisingly, the panchayats did not possess much vitality. On paper the design looked magnificent. In reality it was still a facade. There was, as before, too little decentralization and too much domination by official and unofficial elites. There was still the same old urban bias in the allocation of resources. After a decade the local councils secured only nominal participation. There was no general mobilization of villagers

and their resources. Nehru admired the dynamic role of cooperatives and communes in China, and expected similar performances from his local bodies. But Nehru did not do what Mao had done to enforce rural autonomy, to curb the elites, and to curtail the urban bias. Unlike the communes, the role of "panchayats" (local councils) remained subordinate, secondary, and insignificant.

7.6 Origin of cooperatives

Cooperatives, born in Western Europe around the middle of the nineteenth century, were like the trade unions, a reaction against the excessive power of rising capitalism. This excessive power threatened to make laborers, peasants, and consumers helpless. When the dreams of utopias or early socialist revolution faded away after 1848, they began to adjust themselves to the capitalist system. The laborers started to protect themselves through trade unions and the small farmers and consumers through cooperatives. Trade unions and cooperatives, in the course of time, became powerful and independent movements, but they did not completely forget their anti-capitalist origin and maintained bonds of mutual assistance with socialist parties. By the end of the nineteenth century, cooperatives had greatly improved the condition of farmers in Germany, Denmark, and Ireland. In the twentieth century, socialist states of Eastern Europe and China, as well as Japan, Israel, and Taiwan, have successfully used cooperatives for rural development. Because of their peculiar constitution, cooperatives can coexist with both capitalism and socialism.

7.7 Colonial rural cooperatives: objectives and performance

British administrators had imported the concept of cooperation to solve the problem of rural indebtedness. The Indian peasants were caught in a vicious cycle. Their numbers were increasing while their holdings were diminishing. The law of demand and supply was raising land rents, while colonial trade was depressing crop prices. Low yields, low prices, and high rents increased the need for credit. Again increased demand and high risk raised the interest rates. Thus, a typical small proprietor had a low income and large debts, and paid high rents and still higher interest charges. He marched steadily towards bankruptcy until he finally lost his land. On the other side, a typical merchant moneylender quickly multiplied his assets. Colonial administrators thought that rural cooperatives would break this vicious cycle. In each village the peasant proprietors would unite for mutual help, acquire the habit of thrift, and gradually accumulate their own capital. A thrifty group would become credit-worthy and then would be able to borrow cheaply from a bank instead of a usurer. The members would learn not only to save, but also to invest wisely in better farming. Through cooperation they would escape from the clutches of the moneylender. They would also escape from the middleman by marketing their own produce jointly. Rural cooperatives, however, did not perform in colonial India as they had done in Germany or Scandinavia. Evidently the moneylenders, the middlemen, and the debt-ridden peasants were symptoms of a diseased economy. The symptoms could not be cured by credit unions unless the real causes were remedied. Colonial experts, who were not critical of the imperial economic system, ascribed the failure

of the cooperatives to the noncooperative character of peasants. The Asian peasants did not possess the Protestant ethic.

7.8 Progress of post-colonial rural cooperatives

Cooperation, as we have seen, had flourished briefly during the boom years of the first world war and then collapsed in the following slump. The second world war again brought better prices and more employment for the villagers. Inflation reduced the burden of old debts. After independence there was a spectacular expansion of the cooperative movement. A greater amount of funds were allocated for rural credit. Moneylenders and merchants could no longer exercise their old monopoly. They now faced some institutional competition. In countries where they were immigrant protégés of the colonial power, they were forcibly suppressed. However, the rural cooperatives, while spreading widely, showed some serious shortcomings. One expert called the Indian cooperative movement a colossus with clay feet. Originally cooperatives were designed to ensure both production and equity and to turn the backward into progressives and the weak into strong. Colonial cooperatives did not achieve these objectives. They could not break the vicious cycle. Post-colonial cooperatives are bigger and better supported by the government than their predecessors, but, as yet, it cannot be claimed that rural cooperatives have succeeded, widely and substantially, in performing the productive as well as the protective function. Of course, there are islands of success. But, on the whole, rural areas are not being transformed by cooperatives. The rapidly growing proletariat of sharecroppers and landless laborers are not involved. Very few significant attempts are

being made to organize cooperative agriculture for peasant proprietors. Colonial cooperatives tried to compete with the old merchant moneylenders. Post-colonial cooperatives are competing, in the same feeble manner, with the new rural entrepreneurs. For the present, rural capitalism, not cooperation, is on the rise.

7.9 The problem of land tenure--two views

In the nineteenth century the land question troubled all the three Asian empires--Indian, Chinese, and Russian. In the twentieth century it contributed to their fall. Contemporary revolutions, contrary to the predictions of Marx, have been nurtured in rural areas. Probably future Asian or African revolutions will also have rural roots. Socialists believe that there can be no development without a revolution, that in ex-colonial states a social transformation must precede technological transformation, that the latter is impossible without the former. There are some non-socialist experts, also, who think that grossly inequitable ownership of land is definitely a hurdle in the way of progressive agriculture, a fetter on production. According to them, certain types of land tenure generate and perpetuate rural poverty. More than a hundred years ago there were some revenue officials of the empire who condemned the Permanent Settlement, or the system of landlordism, as a regressive measure in every respect. They advocated that all lands should be owned directly by sturdy cultivators. More recently experts like Wolf Ladejensky kept predicting, in the fifties and sixties, that in spite of CD, agriculture extension, and cooperative credit, many Indian regions would not move forward until the shackles of regressive land tenures were removed.

7.10 Agronomists and agrarian reform

American agronomists, however, have absolute faith in technology. They think they can teach modern methods to every cultivator, big or small, owner or sharecropper. Of course, they recommend some extra help for the little fellows, in the shape of subsidized credit or fertilizer. In response to the clamor about land tenures, agronomists claim that their technology is neutral, not concerned with social structures. But, in effect, the American model of agricultural extension is appropriate for promoting commercial or capitalist agriculture. It succeeds quickly where conditions are favorable, as we have seen in the case of the Punjab. But there are other places where individual enterprise is too severely handicapped. In these unfortunate areas the majority of cultivators must first have more secure rights and then be organized into groups. Where holdings are very small and their owners are extremely poor, mutual aid and cooperation is not only beneficial, but is, in fact, essential. While private ownership can be retained, excessive disparities must be curtailed, services and supplies must be pooled, credit and marketing must be conducted jointly, as has been done in Japan and Taiwan. These remarkable models of nonsocialist agrarian reform evolved in the fifties, but ex-colonial states have not yet been able to follow them successfully.

7.11 Post-colonial progress of land reforms

In the last two decades many land reform measures were introduced in India and elsewhere. As a first step, the rural aristocracy, landlords, and planters who had flourished under colonial rule were deprived of their

extraordinary privileges. Ceilings were imposed on ownership. Some land was redistributed, but the growing numbers of tenants, sharecroppers, and landless laborers have only partially benefited from these measures, and the small proprietors have rarely been fully helped to modernize their farming as in Taiwan. Land reform regulations, imperfect as they were, have been further thwarted in two ways. First, the new ruling classes, though less exclusive and more populist than their forerunners, still have a strong elitist bias. Their concern for the rural poor is more rhetorical than genuine. Hence, the enacted rules were easily evaded. Secondly, the model of development that was being promoted under the inspiration of American experts was that of capitalist agriculture. It not only offered a simple and quick shortcut to increased production, but its emphasis on commercialization and maximizing profits was very agreeable to the new rural elites. However, as we have seen, capitalist agriculture distributes benefits unevenly and aggravates disparity. Agrarian reforms in many ex-colonial states have been enfeebled by lack of genuine sympathy and the confusion of goals.

7.12 The colonial legacy of rural administration

Implementation of rural programs has generally been much weaker than their planning. Often, in the field of operation, good policies have been distorted, and expectations have not been fulfilled. For this gulf between planning and implementation, the system of administration must be held responsible. The system is a colonial legacy, originally designed for establishing order and collecting land taxes. It had performed both functions with a firm hand. For pacification and tax gathering, it had

demanded complete obedience and humble submission. It had ruthlessly suppressed every potential center of defiance. It was highly centralized. A small elite corps of district officers possessing overwhelming prestige and power played the key role. The best of them saw themselves as fathers or guardians and regarded their autocracy as pure benevolence. After independence, certain changes took place in the system. The departments were greatly enlarged. Under American influence new agencies and state corporations were set up, but the expansions and innovations took place mostly at the top. There was little change at the bottom. The district remained, as before, the hub of rural administration, and the prestigious district officer continued to be a magistrate and collector. As the structural pattern of rural administration was not altered, it is not surprising that the old attitudes which had built and operated it also remained unaltered.

7.13 Attempts at reform of rural administration

Apart from the expansion of the "nation building" departments (agriculture, education, health, etc.), three attempts were made to reform the nature and approach of rural administration. The first attempt was made by the colonial rural reconstruction (RR) movement, the second by CD, and the third by the local government (LG) programs, Colonial RR gave a new dimension to the district officer. Besides being a magistrate and collector, he was to become the father of development, the guide-philosopher-friend of the villagers. Obviously the RR reform was confined to attitudes. On the one hand, it did not in the least interfere with the paternalist framework. On the other hand, it brought

idealistic reinforcement. Thirty years later, CD pointed out the need for a new orientation for administrators. It criticized them for the "law and order" mentality. Development required much more than obedience and submission from the people. It required active participation. This point was further emphasized by the proponents of local government. They said that the rural people and their resources could be mobilized only through strong, self-managed, self-supporting local institutions. Government departments should be synthesized with and work through these institutions. CD and LG laid the foundation of a rural administrative infrastructure. But, after five decades of expansion and reform, rural administration still displays serious faults. It generally fails to deliver services and supplies promptly and equitably. The failure is due partly in inadequate resources, partly to an elitist bias, and partly to lack of coordination. And rural administration generally fails to secure popular participation. Traditional attitudes have prevented any synthesis with local institutions or a real partnership with the people. The inhibiting influence of paternalistic centralization, which prevailed in the past, has not yet disappeared.

7.14 Neglect of rural areas--interior colonialism

Villages were economically depressed by the colonial connection and further degraded by urban domination. It is said that the rural people suffered from an exterior as well as an interior colonialism, and even when the former went away, the latter stayed on. In the post-colonial era the gulf between the cities and the villages, instead of being bridged, has been widened. Urban bias has distorted national planning.

The villagers are mistreated economically and they are given only meager and second-class welfare facilities. This discrimination is well illustrated by the examples of rural education and health services. Fewer and inferior schools or clinics and more illiteracy and ill health are found in the villages. Such planning keeps the villages shabby and miserable and consequently creates the intractable problem of the great exodus from the villages to the cities. Migration to the cities physically transfers the difficult rural problems and by concentration magnifies them. It is the nemesis of rural neglect.

7.15 Problems of rural education and health

In the post-colonial era the Departments of Education and Health have been enlarged and the scope of their activities extended considerably. Compared to fifty years ago, death rates have declined and more children are going to school. But, after twenty-five years, there is as much disillusion with programs of rural education and rural health as with other rural programs. At the present pace, it may take a hundred years to wipe out illiteracy or reduce ill health. The orthodox systems are also very costly. They place themselves beyond the reach of the rural poor. In both systems the elitist and urban bias is apparent. Schools, it is said, provide the best exit from the village. Fifty years ago, Gandhi severely criticized the exclusiveness and anti-rural bias of colonial education. He tried to invent an inexpensive, relevant, and practical system of basic education which did not become popular or common. More recently, experiments and suggestions are being made to find cheaper and fewer rural alternatives to the slow-moving and capital-intensive

conventional systems. Nonformal education and extensive use of paramedics are two examples. But the battle between these little Davids and the orthodox Goliaths has not yet begun.

8. THE CHINESE MODEL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We have examined the progress of rural development in India. Let us also glance briefly at the contemporary Chinese model. The basic problems of scarcity, disparity, and disaffection were essentially similar in both countries. But the Chinese communist leaders perceived the priorities in a different manner. They were determined to put an end to both exterior and interior colonialism. They considered the rural class structure and the disparate ownership of land and capital as causes of poverty and as fetters on production. They recognized clearly the damage done to the villages by urban domination and a centralized bureaucracy. Rural reconstruction in China, under communist leadership, passed through three stages. The first stage began with peasant revolts and redistribution of land. The upper classes of landlords and the rich gentry were abolished, but private ownership of land was retained and small farmers were organized in mutual aid teams. The second stage began with the assumption of sovereign power. The goal of a complete social and technological transformation was clearly defined. The first step towards socialist agriculture was to organize cooperative or semi-socialist agriculture, a halfway house. The mutual aid teams were combined into cooperatives, first small and then large, and land and implements were pooled. The third stage came next with the transition to socialist agriculture, and the organization of communes, brigades, and teams. All means of production were now owned collectively and the rural people were ready for technological progress.

8.1 Organizing socialist agriculture

Socialist agriculture can have as many problems as, or even more problems than, the capitalist agriculture. The Chinese were travelling a rough and hard road. But fortunately the leaders were wise and they had learned three important lessons from the terrible Russian example. First, agriculture was given equal priority with industry. Secondly, instead of complete central control, autonomous and compact rural institutions were built extensively. Thirdly, within the collective system, extremely ingenious and flexible adjustments were made, which provided incentives for higher production to communes, teams, and individual members. Above all, the rural areas received far more favorable economic, political, and social treatment, and urban domination was greatly reduced. Now, after two decades, although the Chinese villagers are still poor, the fearful pressures of scarcity, disparity, and disaffection are diminished. It seems that the vicious cycle of privilege and poverty has been broken. Few experts can claim that the same has happened as yet in India.

8.2 Securing popular participation and mobilization

Planners in India always recognized the crucial importance of popular participation and mobilization, but they were frustrated by their administrative systems. On the other hand, the success of the Chinese planners in achieving these objectives was remarkable. Their concern for local organization and local initiative was genuine. Instead of a superior, patronizing attitude, the Chinese leaders had great faith in the common sense, fortitude, and courage of the peasant. Truly autonomous

and powerful institutions, cooperatives, and communes, which by involving the masses, harnessed their stupendous energy were built. On the foundation of this faith organization was accompanied by intensive social and technical training. "Organize and educate" summed up in a slogan the Chinese method of rural uplift. This method, in spirit as well as in form, differed from the Indian method, which was deeply influenced by the conceptual legacies of the colonial past. The Chinese central government did not appoint village-level workers or extension agents to guide and control the villagers, or stimulate them with favors or grants. Under the Chinese system of training, the workers or leaders, technical or organizational, sprung up from the groups and were selected and controlled by their groups. And, to a great extent, the groups became self-reliant, managing and mobilizing their own resources.

8.3 Priority of rural works

One striking difference between the Indian and Chinese attempts to increase agricultural production was the role of rural public works. Unlike the Indians, the Chinese gave it the highest priority. The Chinese perceived clearly that without constructing a proper infrastructure--embankments, drainage, irrigation, afforestation, terracing, roads--cultivation would be restricted and yields would remain low and uncertain. Agricultural progress would take place in areas where land was developed and risks were reduced. Rural works would pave the way for progressive agriculture. Hence, the villagers were mobilized everywhere to improve the physical land and water environment, which had been badly neglected during two hundred years of decline and anarchy. The institution of the commune made possible an immense yet widely scattered mobilization.

Chinese leaders had also given high priority to solving the problem of rural unemployment. They realized that traditional agriculture, restricted and risky, could not provide enough work, especially when there was too little land and too many people. But the idle, surplus manpower could be immediately engaged in rural works, which would soon enlarge the scope for intensive farming, and permanently increase the demand for more employment. Indian planners did not definitely apprehend the interdependence of, and the linkage between, rural works, institutional organization, intensive farming, and control of rural unemployment.

9. SPECIAL PROJECTS

In colonial times as well as recently, some rural regions have attained, by means of special projects, a level of prosperity higher than the commonly prevailing level in that country. Two famous examples under the British Empire were the Canal Colonies in the Punjab and the Gezira Scheme in Sudan. The Canal Colonies turned the Punjab into the granary of India. First, the infrastructure of irrigation, roads, and market towns was built and arid lands were made fertile, or, in Chinese terms, the base for a progressive and stable agriculture was established. Then, settlers were carefully selected and given good-sized holdings (minimum of 12-1/2 acres), and better welfare services than they had previously. Within a decade the new settlers became remarkably productive and affluent farmers. A flourishing agriculture encouraged the growth of rural industries. In spite of the subsequent increase in population and the fragmentation of holdings, rural Punjab has, ever since, maintained its progressive lead.

Like the Canal Colonies, the Gezira Scheme also began with the settlement of newly irrigated lands. But here, furthermore, a British Commercial Syndicate assumed an important management function. It financed and strictly supervised the cultivation of cotton by the settlers, and bought, processed, and exported the entire crop to England. With substantial holdings, adequate credit, extension guidance, and efficient marketing, the first generation of Gezira farmers soon became wealthier than their compatriots elsewhere. Later, their prosperity declined when their families multiplied and the prices of cotton slumped.

9.1 Imitations of the TVA model

Many ex-colonial countries started settlement programs similar to the Canal Colonies or the Gezira Scheme. In the fifties, another model, regional development modeled after the TVA, became very influential. The American TVA model twenty years earlier had spectacularly improved a depressed area by controlling floods and rebuilding the physical environment. TVA was also famous for a coordinated approach, for combining physical engineering with human (social or institutional) engineering. Many poor countries eagerly adopted the TVA model for their hydro-electric projects. These projects succeeded, more or less, in controlling floods and generating electricity. But the comprehensiveness of the original could hardly be reproduced by the imitators. The TVA could draw upon the enormous resources of a great nation. Through tourism and migration the small, impoverished region could easily be integrated with a vast, affluent, continental economy. Neither of these crucial supports was available to the imitators in poor countries.

9.2 Pilot projects of the sixties--Comilla, Puebla, and CADU

For a few years, in the sixties, three pilot projects attracted the attention of international experts. These were the Comilla Projects in Bangladesh, Puebla in Mexico, and CADU Project in Ethiopia.[1] The Comilla project was sponsored by a training academy. It tried, through prolonged action research in a large experimental administrative unit, to evolve viable models which could be replicated in the whole country. Over a decade four Comilla models were actually replicated and are still being followed in Bangladesh, namely, an improved system: (1) of local government; (2) of small farmers cooperatives; (3) of comprehensive rural works; (4) and of extension training of and through group representatives. The Comilla approach emphasized the importance of local institutions and rural works and insisted that these were essential foundations for a progressive agriculture. Unfortunately, the villagers were willing to accept this approach more eagerly than political leaders, administrators, and extension experts.

The Puebla project was designed to modernize as quickly as possible the growing of corn by medium and small farmers. An area with favorable physical and social conditions was chosen and ample extension advice and inputs were provided. The farmers responded by rapidly adopting the profferred technology and increasing their yields.

CADU was set up under Swedish supervision in a fertile region in Ethiopia. Large investments were made in extension, credit, marketing, and

[1] CADU refers to the rural development project which was launched in 1967 with substantial assistance from the Swedish International Development Aurhority (SIDA) Province. CADU refers to the Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit in Arruse Province. For background on CADU see Nekby (1970) and Tesfai Tecle (1975).

roads. The project aimed to promote both production and equity. According to the evaluations made by the Swedes, the project soon succeeded in raising production and the standard of farming. But the Swedes were less satisfied about the equity aspects of the project. In fact, they found that the advent of commercial farming, by eroding traditional bonds, worsens the position of sharecroppers. CADU was precariously dependent on foreign assistance.

The encouraging results obtained in settlement schemes, river valley projects, or pilot projects highlight the potential for development. They also specify the preliminary conditions which must be fulfilled to start the process.

10. THE SEVENTIES--A DECADE OF CONSOLIDATION OF TWO MODELS: INDIAN AND CHINESE

We have surveyed broadly a century of rural development in India. Our bird's eye view showed the emergence, in the final decade of the last century, of a number of profound rural problems. We described how these problems were perceived by colonial administrators and what solutions were advanced by them. Then, early in our century, came a decade of war and revolutions. It was followed by two decades of colonial rural construction, which was ended abruptly by another decade of war and revolutions. At the end of the war the world was divided into two camps. In the nonsocialist camp, joined by India, American influence intermingled with colonial traditions. The fifties may be called the American decade of community development and agriculture extension. The next decade saw the culmination of American influence, along with a return to older traditions. This was the decade of the "green revolution," and institutional and agrarian

reforms. Concurrently, in the socialist camp, the Chinese model of rural reconstruction was fully fashioned. At present, in the seventies, the two fallen Asian giants, India and China, are standing on their own feet, and marching along two parallel roads to development. Evidently, for both this is a decade of consolidation. Although both are eagerly absorbing western science and technology, neither desires her rural efforts to be guided or supervised by foreign experts. China freed herself from foreign tutors in the fifties and India is doing the same in the seventies. We can say that twenty-five years after the end of the colonial era, there are before us two major models of rural development. On one side is the Indian model which can be fairly described as a shabby, genteel, rural capitalism--disparate, anarchical, and unstable, full of rewards and profits for the rich and strong, but also full of distress and despair for the weak and poor. On the other side is the Chinese model--a rural socialism, drab, austere, and harsh, but extremely organized and disciplined like a human hive.

10.1 A decade of reconsideration for American experts

For American development experts the seventies has become a decade of reconsideration. Twenty years ago, encouraged by the success of the Marshall Plan, they had confidently believed that other indigent client countries could also be rehabilitated in the same way, if not to the same extent. Economists, sociologists, and agronomists came forward to master-mind assistance to the recently emancipated slave nations, now politely called the less developed countries (LDCs). The stages of economic growth were mapped out for the LDCs. By substantially increasing capital investments and managerial skills, both of which could be initially

borrowed from America, the LDCs should quickly increase their GNP. When the cake would become bigger, everyone would have a larger slice, or when wealth became abundant, it would trickle down everywhere. While the economists pointed out this straightforward road to development, the sociologists propounded ingenious ways of manipulating, motivating, and mobilizing the rural people. The agronomists suggested that low-yielding traditional agriculture, which gave only beggarly returns, should, by demonstrations and incentives, be transformed into opulent modern agriculture. After guiding the performance of client LDCs for two decades, the development experts were disappointed. Poor and uneven progress has especially discredited the economic planners. In most LDCs, in spite of American aid, even when growth did take place, it was pathetically small, and decidedly it did not trickle down. In the seventies, the bright old confidence has evaporated, leaving in its place dark doubts and the agony of reappraisal. There is now a gnawing concern about the distribution of the benefits of development. It almost seems as if American donors are about to make social justice a categorical imperative for the LDCs who are recipients of aid. As Keynes said, "We are all socialists now."

10.2 Reorientation of American aid--new ends

Disillusion with the past, and desire for a new orientation, a turning point, is seen clearly in the recent speeches of the World Bank's President and the policy directives of U.S. AID. They ruefully admit that too often development in the LDCs has not benefited their poorer classes. After a quarter century of aid, sixty percent of the LDCs' population continues to live in "relative poverty," and forty percent in "absolute poverty." And

the majority of the relative and absolutely poor live in the rural areas. Amends must now be made for past neglect. Henceforth, the primary purpose of development programs, or aid projects, should be to help the poor in general, and the rural poor in particular. Much greater investment should be made in rural development, and special attention should be paid to the interests of the poorer sections of the rural population--subsistence cultivators and the landless laborers. Rural programs should be carefully designed to reach and serve these "target groups."

10.3 No change in means and methods

Of course, everyone should applaud the new poverty and target groups orientation. But it is, as yet, little more than a declaration of intent. Another decade must pass before the results can be judged. Until now, apart from the rhetoric, no significant changes are perceptible in the operational methods, in the means to achieve the end. If carefully analyzed, the new programs for the improvement of peasant farmers, or landless laborers, are not so very different from the old programs. To serve the small farmers, the old orthodox extension approach is proposed, which relies mainly on a government agent to deliver techniques, credit, and fertilizers. Rural works for the benefit of laborers resemble the old paternalist relief programs. And "integrated rural development" goes only a little further than good old CD.

10.4 The dilemma of American advisors

American advisors face a dilemma when they champion the uplift of the rural poor in LDCs where the ruling elites are not genuinely interested in it.

Of course, food or money can be brought from America for temporary relief of hunger or distress. The hungry can be fed and the naked can be clothed for a short time. But to engineer a permanent change in the status of the downtrodden poor is a different matter. Rural poverty is not simply due to lack of funds or of technology. Frequently the rural depressors are built into the political or economic system. Sponsors of antipoverty programs are assuming that foreign aid can be used as a lever to shift the gears of an indifferent national government, reverse its urban bias, and definitely turn it around toward rural development and the rural poor. The next decade will tell us whether this was a realistic belief, or merely, in the words of Samuel Johnson, an example of the triumph of hope over experience.

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